

How to Write a Personal Bio

Writing a personal bio can be a really fun way to put yourself out there, and there's nothing like having a say in what people think about you. To write either a bio, use the tips and sample text below. A short bio provides readers with a quick overview of your accomplishments and insight into your strengths and interests. It's basically a great vehicle for quickly communicating who you are and what you do. Bios are getting more and more important and you should make sure your bio sells you and brings out your personal brand. Two samples are included after these tips to help you see what a successful bio looks like.

1. **Identify your purpose and audience.** Before you get started writing, you need to know who you're writing for. The bio you would write for a personal web page might be very different than the bio you would write for a college application. Use this to make your bio appropriately formal, funny, professional, or personal.
2. **Narrow down your information.** Be ruthless here—even the most interesting of anecdotes may not be appropriate. For example, an author's bio on a book jacket often mentions past writing accomplishments, whereas an athlete's bio on a team website often mentions the person's height and weight. While it's often okay to add a few extraneous details, they should not make up the majority of your bio.
3. **Write in the third person** (optional). Writing in the third person will make your bio sound more objective – like it's been written by someone else – which can be useful in a formal setting (ex. for work). If the bio is personal, however, writing it in the first person will make it sound friendlier.
4. **Write your name.** This should be the first thing you write. Assume that the people reading the bio know nothing about you.
5. **State your claim to fame.** What are you known for? What do you do for a living? Don't leave this to the end or make your readers guess—they won't and they may well lose interest quickly if it's not up front. This should be explicitly stated in the first or second sentence. Usually, combining it with your name is easiest.
6. **Mention your most important accomplishments, if applicable.** This is a tricky one, and might not be applicable in all situations. Remember that a bio is not a resume. Do not list your accomplishments, and only include them if they are relevant and you have space.
7. **Include personal, humanizing details.** This is a nice way to invite the reader to care. It's also your chance to get some of your personality across.
8. **Include contact information.** This is usually done in the last sentence.
9. **Aim for at least 250 words.** For an online blurb, this is just enough to give the reader a taste of your life and personality without becoming a bore. For a more serious post such as a college entrance bio, delve into the details a little more.
10. **Proofread and revise.** Rarely is writing perfect the first time it hits the pages. And because personal bios are only a small snapshot of a person's life, upon rereading

your bio, you might realize there was information you forgot to include. Have a friend read your bio and give you their feedback. This is important because they can tell you if all the information you want to get though is coming across clearly.

11. **Keep your bio up to date.** Every once in a while, go back and update your bio. By putting in a little work frequently to keep it up to date, you'll save yourself a lot of work when you need to use it again.

Sample School Bio

Kate Thompson is a junior majoring in English at Cuyahoga State. She is set to graduate in 2015 and hopes to also complete a minor in Creative Writing. When asked about what first drew her to prose, she said she loved being able to escape into the worlds she created. She also cited her grandmother, Minnie Phillips, as one of her major writing influences: "My grandma always dreamed of being an author. She finished her first manuscript while she was pregnant with my mom, and publishers at that time wouldn't even give her the time of day. Some of her close friends suggested she publish under a male pen name, but she wouldn't give in. She felt her manuscript was a piece of her soul, and she wanted her readers to know the woman behind the words." Kate said this is what inspired her to pursue writing as a career, and she hopes to follow in her grandmother's footsteps and one day become a published novelist. When she isn't trying to finish her school work or her latest piece of prose, Kate volunteers as an adult literacy tutor, teaching beginning-level reading and spelling to students at the community center. You can also find her leading the English Department's Writers Workshops, which take place every Wednesday at 7 pm in Davis Hall.

Sample Professional Bio

Dr. Jane Doe is a professor of Biology at the University of California, Los Angeles. She received her M.D. from Penn State and eventually earned her spot as supervising doctor at the Pennsylvania Hospital Emergency Center. After her fifteen-year career as a supervisor there, Dr. Doe decided it was time for a change of scenery (and weather) and moved to sunny Los Angeles, where she was offered tenure at UCLA. In addition to teaching, Dr. Doe is a regular contributor to *National Science Quarterly* and an enthusiastic Lakers fan. She recently collaborated on a manuscript with friend and colleague, Dr. Sam Smith, entitled *Parkinsons and the Genetic Response to Eastern Medicine*, in which she and Dr. Smith presented research compiled during a summer spent in India. She currently resides in Los Angeles with her husband Frank, their dog Lucy, and her prize orchids. She can be contacted at JaneDoe@JaneDoe.com.